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1959 MAR 19 AM 10 11

FROM: Embassy, Bonn

TO: Secstate, WASHINGTON

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Rptd: Ambassadors LONDON, PARIS.

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MARCH 17, 1959

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For the Federal Government the period since the Embassy's Despatch 1169 of February 2, has been one of trying to keep things on an even keel while the West works toward agreement on how to meet Soviet moves. This has not been an easy task with the Soviets exploiting their control of the initiative in the absence of an agreed western stand, the press dramatizing statements by political leaders and any implication of dissent in the West, the Opposition pressing constantly for new approaches via "European security" and "disengagement", and even in the Chancellor's own party sympathetic toward more conciliatory and flexible positions. With progress toward an East-West meeting internal opposition elements have been somewhat placated. However, there is no interparty agreement in the Federal Republic on the substance of the West's position. Both FDP and SPD have reformulated their well-known foreign policy views and SPD lack of confidence in the Federal Government is evident in the visits of Ollenhauer, Schmidt and Erler with Khrushchev. At the same time, the CDU is not entirely displeased that the SPD has made itself guilty of "dealing with the devil" and that Ollenhauer came back empty-handed and apparently submitted by the Soviets.

CDU leaders have been putting new public emphasis on the point that efforts toward reunification must not prejudice freedom and security in the Federal Republic. In private conversation with CDU leaders - Erns is a good example - the view is firmly expressed that there is no chance of reunification in freedom now and that American troops must be kept here. In the CDU Bundestag faction there is a current running toward answering "disengagement" advocates by saying military disengagement would be acceptable if tied to "political disengagement", - in the sense that any military disengagement should be tied to agreement on reunification and greater freedom for East European satellite states.

The Chancellor continues to reject disengagement and to see real German and European solutions only in a remote general disarmament. To hold this line against real or suspected British

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softness, which the Chancellor pointedly criticized before the CDU Bundestag faction, Adenauer went again to Paris to reconfirm his solidarity with de Gaulle and to use it in resistance to disengagement. In the conversations with Macmillan efforts have evidently been made to bridge any gap between British and German thinking on this point.

There has also been a great sensitivity here to American views and a nervousness that our position on Germany and European security might be softening in fear of Soviet strength and aggressiveness and in the interest of a general detente. Reliance on Washington was considerably restored by Secretary Dulles' visit here and by opposition Senators' seeming to shift support of a solid American position. However, there remains an unease which will only be resolved when the Western powers have worked out a common position. Meanwhile, the Chancellor is moving to suppress any irresponsible or dissident views in his own party which might give rise to impressions abroad of softness in the CDU itself. He has been remarkably, but not entirely, successful in imposing a discipline of foreign policy silence on his usually undisciplined faction. It seems unlikely that in Western discussions new ideas will be put forward by the Federal Government although the Chancellor is willing to agree to tactical concessions and has spoken particularly of moves to improve relations with Germany's eastern neighbors.

As some sort of high level East-West negotiations become more probable the fear of a war over Berlin is lessened but there remains a great unease that things may go wrong and a great uncertainty as to what line the West can or should agree to hold in the negotiations. In this the Chancellor continues to hold deep popular support against experiments which could lead to a weakening of the Federal Republic's security, especially by any disengagement which would lead to American withdrawal. At the same time, he is still faced with general fear of war over Berlin coupled with unwillingness to surrender the city to the Communists. Soviet proposals to introduce their forces into West Berlin were dismissed abruptly by all as dangerous trickery. There remains little conviction that the West would or should go to war over technicalities of access, although any physical hindering of access to Berlin would, in the general view, call for forceful reaction.

Soviet threats to conclude a separate peace treaty with the GDR are viewed with helpless concern and there is some tendency to say that the Soviets' aim is to give permanence and stability to the division of Germany with Berlin at least neutralized and that there is nothing the West can do about it. Some well-known CDU leaders, Krone for one, warn against attempting to fight the inevitable by concessions (like disengagement offers) which would not block the Soviet's present moves against Berlin and toward

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strengthening the GDR's status but would make even further Communist encroachment easier. Their thought seems to be to try to achieve some (undefined) psychologically satisfactory Berlin solution which will not appear to be a defeat and to retain all present elements of security and stability in the West. Others in the CDU believe it might be useful for the West to take the initiative and propose military disengagement conditional on Soviet agreement to reunification and freedom not only for the GDR but also for the other Soviet satellites. In this situation many thoughts are running to possible solutions by internationalization of Berlin probably under the United Nations, but the plans have no clear shape.

In internal politics the Chancellor has come a cropper in trying to find a candidate for the presidency who can defeat Carlo Schmid.. In a dramatic public defeat in his own party, his wishes in this regard were rejected by the CDU Bundestag faction which refused to support a renewal of Heuss' term, or the candidacy of Erone or of Erhard. Erhard was chosen by party leaders as a sure winner and was pushed by big business in order to make room for its own man in the Ministry for Economic Affairs, but the public refused to give up its economic miracle worker and the CDU Deputies, with a view to 1961 elections and the possibility of Adenauer's leaving the scene, refused to give up their other biggest vote-getter. The subsequent events have led to an intensification and an unprecedented openness of the antagonism of big business to Erhard's economic policies. The forces which rallied to keep Erhard in active politics gave him a strong claim to the succession to Adenauer. They were also evidence of the great importance to the German public of prosperity and stability, but did not mean that Adenauer's policies or leadership are rejected. Adenauer has every intention to remain at the active head of his party and Government through the 1961 elections.

The difficulties over the presidency have shown a vitality in the party, the difficulties of holding its diverse elements together, and a growing weight of other leaders (many of whom like Erhard are not as ardent "Europeans" as Adenauer is) especially in the Bundestag faction. The events do not indicate any imminent end of the Adenauer era. Nevertheless, within the party, especially in Protestant circles, there is restiveness under Adenauer's authoritarian control and criticism of undue rigidity which gives rise to a modicum of thought and talk of change, perhaps by moving Adenauer himself to the presidency. Gerstenmaier, for obvious reasons of overweening ambition, is strongly behind these efforts.

The question of the presidency has been temporarily shelved but a new CDU party committee is being formed to carry the search for a candidate.

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further with a view now to reaching a decision after Easter - probably after the elections in Rhineland-Pfalz and Niedersachsen make clear what margin of control the CDU can count on in the Federal Assembly which elects the President. In order to increase this margin, and in view of the present strains about Berlin, some CDU leaders are thinking of excluding Berlin votes in the Federal Assembly but the legal arguments against this are strong.

Events which may affect the Federal Republic's future course decisively are not expected to spring from internal politics for the near future but rather from outside the Federal Republic. There is no reason to expect any significant shift in internal forces until the outcome of current external developments is clearer. For now, German politicians are hewing more or less to their usual lines, waiting to see what Western position develops and for the reactions from the East. If the West comes to agreement on a position firm in substance and flexible in appearance, German politicians will be content to wait and see how it works with the Soviets. However, this internal balance is not at all stable and disagreement among the western powers or a success in the present crisis for Soviet williness and aggressiveness could have profound effects.

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